



# Complaints Handling Procedure

How to make a complaint and what you can  
expect from us

April 2025

**South Western**  
 **Railway**

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## Accessible versions of this document

If you'd like this document in an accessible format, please get in touch with us.  
Our Customer Relations Team contact details are on the last page of this document.

This document is available online at <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/>

This document details our approach to handling complaints; we always aim to provide you with the best possible service, but we understand that there are times when you may need to contact us to discuss an issue.

The National Rail Conditions of Travel also detail your entitlements if the service is not to the standard expected (these are available from any staffed station, our Customer Services team or online at [https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times\\_fares/conditions-of-travel.aspx](https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/conditions-of-travel.aspx)).

At South Western Railway (SWR) we use the Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) definition of a complaint as: 'Any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer or potential customer about service delivery or company or industry policy where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected'.

## Complaints handling values

### Feedback mechanism and response

- We want to hear from you. Our continually improving contact mechanisms are detailed and we always welcome suggestions for how we can improve. If you do have to make contact with us, we do aim to put things right for you first time, this is important to us.

### People, processes and structure

- Our structure and internal reporting processes allow for the escalation of concerns and a business wide understanding of areas to improve, as well as a shared vision of our goal to deliver positive customer journeys.

### Organisational culture

- We believe in an open and honest relationship with our customers, acknowledging the vital impact our colleagues have on your experience and empowering them to make decisions and actively resolve issues in their remit.

# How to make a complaint

If you're unhappy with any aspect of our service, there are several ways you can tell us. We are ready to listen.

## Talk to our staff at the station or on the train

We train our staff to handle complaints fairly and efficiently, and to solve any problems there and then, if they can, and we provide a number of tools to enable this to happen.

If you want your complaint to be formally recorded, or it involves a member of SWR staff and will require investigation into what happened, we will either provide one of our complaint forms or the contact details for our Customer Relations Team. Our Forms are available at all South Western Railway staffed stations and Customer Relations contact information is available from all SWR staff.

## Get in touch with our Customer Relations Team

If you don't tell our staff straight away, you can get in touch with our Customer Relations Team, 7 days a week every day, except Christmas Day and Boxing Day, and outside of these hours a recorded message will advise when the centre will be open. They'll be happy to help with your complaint. Here's how to contact them:

Web: [contact form](#)

X: @SW\_help

Live Chat: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/contact-and-help/contact-us>

Call: 0345 600 0650

Write to: Freepost SWR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

In addition, complaints forms are available at all staffed SWR train stations where our train services call. Once completed please post to the address provided. Just ask a member of staff and they'll be happy to give you a copy. Our Customer Relations Team's contact details can also be found on all of our major publications, prominently displayed at our stations, website and via our Facebook page or our X feed.

## Get in touch with our Social Media Team

We understand the need to get your questions answered as soon as possible, to enable you to get in touch with us, when best suits you, our Social Media team are online 24 hours a day. They'll be happy to help with your queries and where further investigation is needed, they will direct you to make a formal complaint. Here's how to contact them.

X: @SW\_Help

Messenger: [www.facebook.com/SWRailway](https://www.facebook.com/SWRailway)

We won't discuss complaints about our staff on Facebook or X. Any post that identifies a member of staff will be removed and the complaint acknowledged and passed to our Customer Relations Team to investigate and respond. We will let you know that your complaint has been passed on via the communications method used in the original contact.

Our customer facing staff and social media team will do their best to resolve issues however, they can also direct you to the channels for making a formal complaint. Staff are trained to recognise expressions of dissatisfaction and when it is necessary to make a formal complaint, we will direct them to our dedicated Customer Service Centre via our website or through email.

## Meet our managers

We want to get to know our customers, so we can shape a service that best matches your needs. We hold regular sessions where you can talk to our Senior Managers and Directors about our service, have the opportunity to ask questions and to raise issues or complaints in person. Details of these will be promoted on our social media feeds or our Customer Relations Team will be able to supply you with details.

## Making a complaint – what to include

The more information you give us about your complaint, the sooner we can get back to you with a full reply. For example, please include:

- Your Full Contact Details.
- The time and date of your journeys.
- The stations you travelled to and from.
- A detailed description of the series of events that took place.
- Copies of your tickets and any other documents that might help. This is not essential but where possible it will help us to identify trains or staff involved.
- Any additional information that you feel will help us investigate your complaint.

## Helping you make a complaint

You can ask a friend, family member, guardian, support worker or carer to make a complaint on your behalf. We will need your permission in these circumstances so we can comply with the GDPR regulations. This does not apply if you are the parent or guardian of a child aged 16 or under.

We will accept complaints made by an intermediary organisation on your behalf. However, we will require explicit consent from you that the third party has the right to act on your behalf. This is to protect you.

# Giving you the best service, we can

We want every experience you have with us to be an easy one, so we work hard to give you a great service every time. Regretfully we know sometimes things go wrong. If they do, we want to hear about it so we can make it right and stop it happening again.

If you do want to complain, we want to make it as easy as possible for you. We would prefer that you don't have a reason to be unhappy, here are some of the things we do to make that happen:

- We have a dedicated Complaints Relations Team who are committed to ensuring a first contact resolution where possible.
- We make sure you can find the information you want quickly and easily.
- We give our people the information, tools and training they need to answer your questions and resolve any problem on the spot.
- We're always looking for ways to improve our service and working with our people and processes to make them a reality. To prove this commitment; we will produce a twice-yearly Customer Report which will be available in full at our larger stations and in summary format at our smaller stations. The Customer Report will also be on our website and through our Customer Relations Team.



# Handling complaints fairly and efficiently

Our complaint handling process not only makes it easy for you to tell us you're unhappy but helps us to put things right for you as quickly and as fairly as we can. Here's how:

- We write everything clearly and in plain English so there's no room for confusion.
- We investigate every complaint fully and fairly, steps of investigation will vary based on the complaint, however we commit to use available tools such as internal records, industry data, CCTV, and staff interviews to investigate complaints where required.
- We keep your details confidential and full details of our privacy policy can be found on our website using the following link: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/privacy-policy>
- We address every point you raise with us, so you will get a full reply.
- We do everything we can to put things right for you first time.
- We monitor and audit our responses to make sure they're of a high standard.
- Our Managers get regular updates about the complaints, so we can make changes where we need to.
- We review our Complaints Handling Procedure every year to make sure it's effective.
- Dealing with volumes of complaints – we are aware that at times there will be increases in customer contacts as such we work to ensure there are always enough staff to respond to your complaint within our timescales.

## As a guide, the following shows the steps that we take when investigating a complaint:

- Analyse your complaint, to make sure we identify all the elements in it and any facts to be checked.
- Evidence gathering, we will look at service records and compare what you experienced with what our policies promise you should experience – if we need more information from you, we will ask for it.
- Investigation: Corroboration and analysis: an objective review of all the evidence including talking to any staff involved.
- Sum all this up to compare what happened to you with what should have happened.
- Understand the reasons why it happened, so that we can explain it to you.
- Respond: Send you a response which as far as possible resolves your complaint in full.

# When a third party's involved

If your complaint involves another rail company, we'll send your complaint to them and ask them to get in touch and we will let you know when we've done that. Claims for delayed trains (if travelling on a South Western Railway service) will be dealt with by us regardless of who was responsible for the delay.

If your complaint involves a journey that features more than one rail company, we will liaise with the other companies involved to ensure you receive a co-ordinated response.

We work with a number of third parties to deliver different aspects of our service safely, for example cleaning providers. If your complaint involves a third party, you won't need to contact them directly as we will deal with your complaint as the contractor works on our behalf.

## Penalty fare/unpaid fares notice

If your complaint relates to the issuing of a Penalty Fare or Unpaid Fares Notice that has been filed and you want to make an appeal, you should do so within 21 days of receiving the notice. Where your appeal is handled by a third party, we are informed of relevant details to help reach a satisfactory solution for you, the independent appeals process does remain impartial. Appeals can be made in writing to:

The Independent Appeals Service  
PO BOX 212  
Petersfield  
GU32 9BQ

Full details of our Revenue Protection Policy can be viewed on our website  
<https://www.southwesternrailway.com/travelling-with-us/ticket-checks-and-revenue-protection/revenue-protection-policy>

Complaints about ticket sales will be dealt with if you bought your ticket from a South Western Railway sales point (booking office, ticket machine, staff member, website, or app). Tickets bought from third party retailers should be directed to the retailer.



# Claiming for losses, personal injury, or property damage

Claiming for personal injury: If you need to claim for personal injury, you are fully entitled to seek independent legal advice and submit a personal injury claim via appointed Solicitors. Please also make our staff aware straightaway of any injury you sustain whilst travelling on our trains or through our stations. Letting our staff know if there has been an issue will allow them to make areas safe and prevent anyone else suffering injury or damage.

Claiming for losses or property damage: If you need to claim for losses or property damage, please write to or email our Customer Relations Team. Please also make our staff aware straightaway of any injury or damage to property you sustain whilst travelling on our trains or through our stations. Letting our staff know if there has been an issue will allow them to make areas safe and prevent anyone else suffering injury or damage.

# What you can expect from us

## Complaints service standards

When you contact our Customer Relations Team, we'll always acknowledge receipt of your complaint, you will be given a unique reference number for your complaint.

If we need to check any specifics before we reply or carry out a more detailed investigation, we will contact you within 20 working days. We close 95% of cases within 20 working days. We always let you know if we need more time to respond and will keep you up to date.

If the number of complaints we get goes up unexpectedly, and we are taking longer than expected to respond, we'll keep you updated. We will ensure that our website advises of this, we will also inform relevant industry partners including The Rail Ombudsman.

We continue to work on improving our response times to complaints.

We will report on the average time it takes us to reply and include this in our Customer Report, as well as regularly reporting our performance to the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR). We shall also report where required to The Rail Ombudsman.

We will ensure that all outstanding concerns have been addressed when corresponding with a customer at the point of resolution.

Where a complaint relates to a delay, we will ensure that we provide details of compensation arrangements and how to claim.

## Staff complaints

Complaints made about South Western Railway staff members will be recorded onto our Customer Relations Management database and forwarded to the relevant line manager. This will allow for a full investigation to take place. We respect our colleagues right to confidentiality; we will be unable to share the details of any corrective action taken relating to individual staff members that may have taken place as a result of the complaint made. We do commit to fully investigating feedback that we receive and acting as appropriate.

## We'll pay compensation when it's due

Delay Repay – If your overall journey was delayed by 15 minutes or longer, you may be entitled to claim compensation under our Delay Repay scheme (except when delays are caused by planned engineering works or another train operating company). You may also be eligible to claim if you've missed your connection to other National Rail services because of a delay or cancellation on your SWR train. More information can be found on our website at: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/contact-and-help/delay-repay>

Details of the scheme are outlined in our Passenger's Charter, a copy of which can be found at <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/other/about-us/passengers-charter> or from one of our staffed stations.

Automated Delay Repay (ADR) is available if you're using a Touch smartcard season ticket, or if you've bought an Advance ticket through <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/train-tickets>

## Complaint Management

We reserve the right to terminate any correspondence or communication that could be construed as abusive or bullying in content, voluminous, frivolous or vexatious, or which specifically diverts resources and affects the Customer Relations area of our operation. This is a decision that we take very seriously and prior to taking it, your case will be reviewed by a senior manager, and we will always consult with Transport Focus before making any such decision. We will advise you in writing of the reasons behind the decision. This will not affect your right to appeal to The Rail Ombudsman and we will provide their details at the time the decision is made.

## Training

All South Western Railway staff receive training in how to identify and resolve customer complaints. An ability and empathy to do so also forms part of our recruitment process and is embedded into the customer focused culture of the business. We believe that where possible a customer query is best dealt with in real time, to this effect we are committed to empowering our staff to best handle customer queries. Our staff have mobile devices, with our custom business applications, which allow staff access to up-to-date train running and connection information. We also have a 'Back on Track' system which allows our staff to best resolve a customer issue face to face, enabling journeys to be carried out as satisfactorily as possible.

We are committed to ensuring all South Western Railway staff, including any staff working on our behalf, are aware of our Complaints Handling Procedure and know how to direct complaints to the Customer Relations Team. Our Social Media team are trained to acknowledge when a customer alludes to wishing to make a complaint and have a full understanding of where to direct the customer.

Our Customer Relations Teams receive extensive training regarding how to identify a complaint, how to ensure each issue raised with us within that complaint is accurately recorded on our Customer Relationship Management system and how to resolve the complaint to the customer's satisfaction.

## Quality Assurance

We regularly monitor our Complaints Handling Process to make sure it is as effective as possible and adheres to the standards and commitments we have made to our customers.

All calls to our Customer Relations Team are recorded and monitored to make sure we are dealing with complaints in the best way possible.

Each Customer Service advisor has their work monitored against a Quality Assurance framework to ensure our high standards are maintained. When appropriate additional training and coaching is provided.

We also survey passengers who have used our Customer Relations service to see how satisfied they were with the process, and outcome of their complaint.

# Taking your complaint further

If you're unhappy with our first reply, we will look at your complaint again for you. We'll also make sure a Manager reviews both your complaint and our initial response to make sure any mistakes are spotted. This process will be carried out as quickly as possible and you will be contacted by one of our Contact Centre teams (in writing) to relay the findings of our further investigation.

Escalating your complaint with us does not prevent you from also involving the relevant passenger body as detailed below – please note this can only be done 40 days from the date of your initial complaint.

The Rail Ombudsman is an independent, not-for-profit, organisation. They offer a free, expert service to help sort out unresolved customer complaints about service providers within the rail industry. Their vision is to inspire customer confidence and to deliver a service fairly to ensure the right outcome in every case.

The Rail Ombudsman  
Freepost – Rail Ombudsman  
1st Floor, Premier House  
Argyle Way  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire  
SG1 2AD

Website: [www.railombudsman.org](http://www.railombudsman.org)

Email: [info@railombudsman.org](mailto:info@railombudsman.org)

Tel: 0330 094 0362

X: @RailOmbudsman

SMS/Text: 07427 580 060

Opening Hours: 09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday only.

## Alternative dispute resolution

The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulation 2015 requires us to advise you of an 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' (ADR) organisation in the event we cannot settle your complaint.

# Your privacy and the Data Protection Act

Keeping your details secure is a priority for us and we will follow the procedures set out in our Privacy Policy.

- The Office of Road & Rail and Rail Delivery Group might use your information for research purposes – for example, they may contact you to find out more about why you complained and how your complaint was handled – but you can opt out of this if you want to.
- When you contact us, we store your personal details on our dedicated and secure systems.
- We're committed to complying with Data Protection laws and to protecting any personal data we hold on our systems.
- We train all of our staff in how to follow the relevant Data Protection law, and we review our processes regularly to make sure they're in line with the act.
- All correspondence sent to our Customer Relations Team is stored electronically on our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). Any paper mail is scanned onto the CRM and the original held in storage for 6 months before being securely destroyed.

If we don't hear from you for 26 months we currently will securely and permanently delete any personal details in relation to your complaint we have for you on our Customer Relationship Management system.

# How we deal with complaints and complaints data

## Improving our service

We understand that the needs of the customers and communities which we serve change from time to time. We want to ensure that we respond to that change to exceed your expectations and our own high standards.

When we receive your views, we record the good as well as the bad elements and share these accordingly. Whilst we are aware of the need to improve and to use customer feedback to develop the service provided, it is also right to recognise our colleagues who are performing to a high standard. We use positive feedback to share best practice and improve the services we offer.

The reports help us work out where we can improve, and what changes we need to make to give our customers a great service. That's why we're always happy to hear from you. We will:

- Use the complaint data to identify the root causes of complaints.
- Take action to reduce the chance of a similar issue happening again.
- Regularly review our performance when dealing with complaints to improve how we deal with them.

We will also provide data to the ORR on the number of comments and complaints we receive and how quickly we deal with them.

## Governance, policy and leadership

Our Managing Director looks after an Executive team of Directors who are responsible for different areas of the company. Complaints sits under the Customer Experience directorate, under the Customer Experience Director. Information about our overall complaint levels and topics are fed monthly into the Customer & Communities Working Group by our Head of Customer Contact Centres, the outcomes along with information about our complaints are then fed into a Customer & Communities Steering Group, directors of the franchise will use the information when planning the future of the business. Trend analysis of complaints will allow the executive team to develop our business strategy around areas identified for improvement and satisfaction.

## Recording complaints

All complaints are recorded on our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This data is collated centrally and used to generate a number of daily, weekly and monthly reports that are passed to the Managers responsible for that area of the business. This ensures that trends can be identified, and problems resolved.

Each time a customer contacts us it is important, and we value feedback on the service we have provided. Complaints feed into an internal continuous improvement process which seeks to identify the underlying causes of customer dissatisfaction.

South Western Railway complaint data is also shared with the Office of Road and Rail on a periodic basis. We are committed to industry standard data reporting, and we meet the requirements of the ORR's core data reporting.

## Record keeping

All complaints are recorded, along with general information that helps us identify areas of improvement. They include:

- Journey information such as where the journey began and ended.
- The date of travel.
- The class of travel.
- The type of ticket held.
- The name of the advisor who dealt with the complaint.
- The date we received the complaint, and the date we responded.
- Reports received from internal SWR departments and Managers.

## Get in touch

We want to ensure that it is easy as possible to get in touch, we have a wide range of contact options:

Use our online form at: [contact form](#)

X: @SW\_Help

Facebook: [Facebook.com/SWRailway](https://www.facebook.com/SWRailway)

Live Chat: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/contact-and-help/contact-us>

Contact Centre: 0345 600 0650

Lost Property: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/contact-and-help/lost-property>

We have partnered with MissingX, the world's largest lost and found database <https://www.missingx.com/>

Post: Freepost SWR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

OR

South Western Railway Customer Service Centre  
First Floor  
Overline House  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO15 1GW



